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ABSTRACT

A group of learning disabilities teachers prepared a series of workshops to share their strategies and techniques with regular classroom teachers. Among workshop topics presented were introduction to learning disabilities, characteristics and emotional development of the learning disabled child, motor training, and an educator's discussion of the school experiences of his learning disabled son. (Contents of the 10 workshop sessions are outlined.) (Author/SBH)

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TECHNIQUES FOR ORGANIZING AND PRESENTING
A LEARNING DISABILITIES WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT:

A need was felt for special education to be an integral part of regular education in order to provide the best learning experiences for the student who is having academic difficulties. To meet this need, a group of Learning Disabilities teachers prepared a series of workshops to share their strategies and techniques with regular classroom teachers.

Teachers of regular classrooms have for some time indicated both interest in, and need for, training in working with handicapped children in their classes. Increased mainstreaming has resulted from the emphasis on least restrictive educational alternatives. This, in turn, has placed in the regular classroom greater numbers of children who are in need of special help. Responding to this need, a panel of Learning Disabilities teachers in District 65, Evanston, Illinois, presented a 15-hour workshop for teachers and administrators. The emphasis of the workshop was on classroom activities which help to maintain the learning disabled student within the regular curriculum. Several sessions were devoted to the understanding of the LD child and his/her learning differences.

The major goal of the workshop was to effect, through teacher training, significant improvement in the academic and emotional status of the learning disabled child. Important aspects of this goal were to promote understanding of the LD child, to offer suggestions for delivery of regular educational services with some modifications of materials, and to discuss meeting individual needs of the LD child in the regular classroom.

Among workshop topics presented were an introduction to Learning Disabilities, characteristics and emotional development of the LD child, motor training, and an

educator's discussion of the school experiences of his learning disabled son. Films, filmstrips, and talks by specialists were included. Individual sessions were devoted to the total language experience, including reading, writing, and spelling, as well as receptive and expressive oral language. Later sessions were devoted to math computation and concepts, and to the development of conceptual skills as part of the social studies and science curricula.

Two written surveys of the workshop participants, one immediately after and another several months after the presentation, indicated that the teachers had found the workshop to be helpful. They reported increased understanding of learning disabled children, and a functional application of the workshop ideas to classroom instruction.

The following is a description of the development of the workshop from its inception to its conclusion. The proposed workshop was an outgrowth of a series of six workshops given during the previous school year by various disciplines of the Special Services Department.

A proposal, entitled, "The Learning Disabled Child in the Classroom," was submitted to the School District Director of Academic Studies:

I. Objectives.

- A. To familiarize District 65 teachers with recognizing and understanding how to work with learning disabled students

- B. To assist teachers in working with all children with learning problems

II. Activities to be undertaken to meet the objectives.

A. Plan presentations by

1. Acknowledged authorities in the fields of Learning Disabilities and Psychology
2. District staff, including regular education classroom teachers, physical education teachers, curriculum consultants, and special services personnel

B. Preview and review pertinent films, filmstrips, and literature

C. Prepare hand-outs

1. Check-list for recognizing problem areas
2. Recommendations for ameliorating deficits
3. Suggestions for classroom modifications for the student who is not functioning at grade level
4. Glossary
5. Bibliography
6. Schedule of sessions
7. Workshop evaluation check-lists

III. Relationship between this project and district curricula needs.

Given an increase in class size and diagnosed learning

problems, as well as the district's commitment to the best educational experience for each student, suggestions will be made to assist the teachers and students in meeting district curriculum needs.

IV. Plan for implementing project outcomes.

A district-wide series of ten 90-minute after-school workshops will be offered during the fall semester. Two professional growth credits will be given participants attending a minimum of eight sessions. Films, lectures, discussions, and practical demonstrations will be utilized.

V. Method of evaluation.

Participants will evaluate the workshop by means of a check-list, immediately upon completion of the project. A second evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the workshop training will be made three months later.

VI. Duration of workshop preparation.

- A. Three weeks summer preparation
- B. Weekly planning sessions preceding each workshop session

VII. Number of participants needed to plan the workshop:
five LD teachers

Upon acceptance of the proposal, the following schedule for the workshops was adopted:

Session 1. Dr. Doris Johnson, Director of the Program in Learning Disabilities, Northwestern University: A Comprehensive Overview of Learning Disabilities.

During the initial workshop session, Dr. Johnson gave a comprehensive overview of the LD child, using audio-visual aids and case studies. Emphasis was placed on the fact that many techniques used by regular classroom teachers are also appropriate for the learning disabled child. Her presentation took into account the possibly insufficient special education training on the part of the participants.

Session 2. Film: "Specific Learning Disabilities in the Classroom."

The film, one of a series of three, clearly demonstrated the problems confronting an LD child in the regular classroom, as well as the gaps in the child's performance. Following the film, the workshop team pinpointed specific characteristics of the learning disabled child.

Sessions 3 and 4. Dr. Kenneth Moses, Psychologist: The Emotional Development of the Child with Learning Disabilities. Dr. Moses contrasted the stages of emotional growth and development in the normal child with those of the learning disabled child.

Session 5. Team of specialists from K-5 school, including LD teacher, psychologist, social worker, speech/language clinician, school nurse, reading specialist: Independent Auditory Activities for Use in the Classroom.

These specialists demonstrated cassette tape recordings and worksheets which they had developed for use in the classroom.

Session 6. Social studies consultant and workshop team: Conceptual Skills and Their Relationship to Social Studies and Science.

Demonstration of these skills was correlated with the district's social studies and science curricula. Workshop participants were requested to bring, to the next session, ideas and materials that had been effective for them in the areas of reading, writing, and spelling.

Session 7. (a) Filmstrip and cassette tape: "Characteristics of Children with Special Needs"

(b) Discussion of the Language Experience: Reading, Writing, and Spelling.

The hierarchy of language skills was presented in the filmstrip, one of a series of four. Suggestions were given by the workshop team and participants for dealing with various academic problems in the classroom. Emphasis was placed on use of the district curricula, and on use of district criterion reference tests.

Session 8. (a) A Parent's View of His Learning Disabled Child

(b) Physical education teacher: Motor Training.

The parent described the frustrations encountered by the LD child and his family. The physical education teacher

demonstrated a program that he had developed for use with children having gross motor problems. Workshop participants were requested to bring, to the next session, ideas and materials that had been effective for them in the area of math.

Session 9. Regular classroom teachers and workshop team:
The Math Experience.

In discussing math concepts and computation, task analysis and the use of concrete aids were demonstrated. Emphasis was placed on use of the district curricula, and on use of district criterion reference tests.

Session 10. Wrap-up.

The final session was devoted to tying up loose ends, and to the participants' evaluation of the workshop.

Response by the participants was extremely favorable at the end of the workshop, and more important, in response to the evaluation questionnaire sent three months later. The teachers felt that the ideas and suggestions generated by the workshop were useful, and that they had a better understanding of the learning disabled child and his problems. There were requests for additional workshops.

A packet prepared by the workshop team may be obtained by writing to Maxine Unger, Special Services, School District 65, 1314 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, IL 60201. This packet contains information designed for the regular classroom teacher who works with learning disabled students. Included are the

workshop monograph, a selected bibliography, a glossary of Learning Disabilities terms, a check-list of observable classroom behavior in the learning disabled child, and the schedule of the workshop sessions.

AUDIO-VISUAL REFERENCES

Davidson Films, 3701 Buchanan Street, San Francisco, CA 94123

"Specific Learning Disabilities in the Classroom"

"Specific Learning Disabilities - Remedial Programming"

"Specific Learning Disabilities - Evaluation"

Teaching Resources Corp., 100 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116

4 filmstrips and cassette tapes:

"Individual Differences"

"Characteristics of Children with Special Needs"

"Organizing Your Classroom"

"Handling Behavioral Problems"